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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 008817

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CO](#) [FARC](#)

SUBJECT: FARC DECLINES GOC PRISONER EXCHANGE, BLAMES GOC FOR IMPASSE

REF: BOGOTA 8367

1. (U) On September 16, ANNCOL posted a message from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) People's Army (FARC-EP) declining the Colombian government's offer to hold a prisoner exchange in Bolo Azul, Valle del Cauca Department. The FARC reiterated longstanding demands in the communique and added another name to the list of imprisoned FARC members they want returned) Francisco Caraballo.

2. (U) Francisco Caraballo aka "El Negro" or "Pacho" was a leader of a splinter faction of the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) that refused to demobilize during the 1991 peace process when he was arrested in June 1994. Caraballo was sentenced to 38 years on charges of conspiracy to kidnap, murder, and sedition. Some human rights NGOs charged the GOC had failed to follow due process. In a 2004 interview, Caraballo remarked that he supported the idea of a united guerrilla organization made up of FARC, EPL, and National Liberation Army (ELN) fighters. The FARC called for EPL's Caraballo and the ELN's Francisco Galan to be freed on ANNCOL's website in 2004.

3. (U) Valle del Cauca Governor Angelino Garzon told "W Radio" on September 16 that he still believed the FARC would negotiate in the future. He claimed that, although the FARC and GOC have had no success during the Uribe Administration on a prisoner exchange, he did not believe the FARC's reply was a refusal. He added that Valle del Cauca Department would remain available for any negotiation.

4. (U) Begin informal translation of FARC communique posted on September 16:

The FARC Ratifies its Willingness to Achieve a Humanitarian Exchange.

-- The proposal of a prisoner swap or exchange through a "humanitarian accord" between the Colombian State and the FARC-EP to put an end to the captivity of prisoners of war on both sides has been, and remains, a reoccurring initiative of the FARC that the state has systematically denied.

-- The will of the FARC-EP to establish an encounter between the parties has been backed up with action. Since the beginning of this government, we named spokespeople and proposed a "despeje" (demilitarized zone) in the municipalities of San Vicente del Caguan and Cartagena del Chaira, Caqueta Department. The government refused those locations, arguing that it was carrying out Plan Patriota and that the FARC was using a ploy to ease military operations in the area. In light of this false estimation by the government, the FARC-EP proposed that public forces depart Pradera and Florida municipalities in Valle del Cauca Department for a period of just 30 days, to guarantee the safety of representatives.

-- To the contrary, the government has neglected the national outcry by the victims' families, numerous social and political sectors, various ex-presidents, local opinion leaders, the Catholic Church, its own prisoners and allies. The government offers unworkable counter-proposals only to show-off and grandstand to further its own interests. Consequently, it attempts to conceal its only clear, defined policy: to wage a war against the Colombian people and its organizations without considering peaceful options to resolve the crisis.

-- The Colombian government has ignored good-faith offers of other governments and international organizations on many occasions that we could name. Lies and deceit are routine in state diplomacy and used to manage the international community's declarations and create a favorable opinion for their own goals. When used in this way, the simple issue of a humanitarian exchange becomes a propaganda tool and a campaigning issue for presidential re-election.

-- The FARC-EP appreciate the French, Swiss, and other supportive nations for their political outlets, and efforts to help solidify a humanitarian exchange to end the prisoners' drama brought on by Colombia's internal conflict. This continuing effort is a result of the Colombian public's longing to free their prisoners.

-- The FARC-EP once again confirms before international public opinion its dedicated willingness to succeed with a humanitarian exchange freeing all of our prisoners of war, including Francisco Caraballo, at a separate location once we sign an agreement. As the Secretariat restated, the eventual meeting will take place in our national territory. Therefore, we demand that the public forces withdraw from Pradera and Florida municipalities in Valle del Cauca Department for 30 days.

International Commission of the FARC-EP
Mountains of Colombia, September 10, 2005

End text.
WOOD